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R 211958Z APR 83  
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7067  
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
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CINCSO FOR INTAFF; CINCLANT ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: SHUM, AR  
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

REF: BUENOS AIRES 1932 (NOTAL)

1. [REDACTED] SUMMARY: ABOUT 15,000 PEOPLE TOOK PART IN A HUMAN RIGHTS MARCH TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE IN THE PLAZA DE MAYO ON APRIL 15, THE LARGEST DEMONSTRATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EVER. ABOUT TWICE AS MANY PEOPLE PARTICIPATED AS IN LAST OCTOBER'S MARCH. RESTRAINT SHOWN BY BOTH SIDES RESULTED IN A PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION. THE PARADE WAS ANOTHER REMINDER THAT THE ISSUE OF MISSING PERSONS WILL CONTINUE TO BE A MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE DURING THE COMING ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS, DAMAGING TESTIMONY ABOUT

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THE REPRESSIVE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY OF THE LATE 1970S BY A FORMER POLICE INSPECTOR WAS PUBLISHED;

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"LA SEMANA" MAGAZINE BEAT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH IN COURT FOR THE SECOND TIME IN FOUR MONTHS OVER THE ISSUE OF CONFISCATING MAGAZINES THAT CONTAIN ARTICLES CRITICAL OF THE MILITARY; A JUDGE MADE A SURPRISE VISIT TO INSPECT THE INFAMOUS CASEROS PRISON; AND CELS RELEASED A LIST OF 47 FORMER SECRET DETENTION CENTERS. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) HUMAN RIGHTS MARCH

ABOUT 15,000 PEOPLE TOOK PART IN A HUMAN RIGHTS MARCH TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE ON APRIL 15, ABOUT TWICE THE NUMBER IN LAST OCTOBER'S MARCH. A COMMISSION LED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO, HEBE DE BONAFINI, AND NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER, ADOLFO PEREZ ESQUIVEL, TRIED TO PRESENT A PETITION WITH OVER 210,000 SIGNATURES CALLING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT MISSING PERSONS TO AN OFFICIAL OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. THEY WERE TOLD, HOWEVER, THAT NO OFFICIAL WAS PRESENT IN GOVERNMENT HOUSE TO RECEIVE THE PETITION. BONAFINI TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE PETITION WOULD BE PUT IN SAFEKEEPING UNTIL THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS DECIDED HOW TO TURN THEM IN TO THE GOA. CATHOLIC BISHOP JORGE NOVAK, ONE OF THE MARCH LEADERS, CRITICIZED THE GOA FOR NOT RECEIVING THE PETITION, TELLING THE PRESS THAT "IT WOULDN'T HAVE COST THEM ANYTHING TO RECEIVE US AND SIGN A RECEIPT". OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION THAT ENTERED GOVERNMENT HOUSE INCLUDED BISHOP JAIME DE NEVARES, SOME CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADERS, REPRESENTATIVES OF RADICAL LEADER RAUL ALFONSIN, AND SOCIALIST SIMON LAZARA.

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3. [REDACTED] COMMENT: THIS WAS THE LARGEST DEMONSTRATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA THAT WE KNOW OF. THE FACT THAT IT DREW ABOUT TWICE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE THAT LAST OCTOBER'S MARCH DID CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE GOA'S BEING WEAKER NOW THAN THEN, TO THE GOA'S NOT PROHIBITING THE MARCH (WHICH IT DID LAST OCTOBER, BUT THEN ALLOWED IT TO TAKE PLACE ANYWAY), AND TO THE INCREASED INTEREST IN AN ACCOUNTING FOR THE MISSING PERSONS. RATHER THAN RISK A CONFRONTATION AND POSSIBLE BLOODSHED, THE GOA DECIDED TO ALLOW THE MARCHERS TO ENTER THE HISTORIC PLAZA DE MAYO, WHICH IT DID NOT LAST OCTOBER. FOR THEIR PART, THE ORGANIZERS

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GAVE WAY IN A DISPUTE OVER THE ROUTE OF MARCH AND PREVENTED SOME PERONIST YOUTH GROUPS FROM TOPPLING BARRICADES AT ONE POINT. THUS, THE RESTRAINT SHOWN BY BOTH SIDES RESULTED IN A PEACEFUL, BLOODLESS MARCH. THE NUMBER OF MARCHERS INDICATES THAT THE MISSING WILL CONTINUE TO BE AN IMPORTANT ISSUE DURING THE COMING ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN AND TRANSITION TO A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT. END COMMENT.

4. (U) TESTIMONY ON REPRESSION

ON APRIL 13, ARTICLES APPEARED IN THE ARGENTINE PRESS TELLING OF THE TESTIMONY GIVEN TO THE ARGENTINE COMMISSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WITH HEADQUARTERS IN MADRID, OF A FORMER POLICE INSPECTOR, RODOLFO PEREGRINO FERNANDEZ, WHO HAD BEEN AN AIDE OF THE FORMER INTERIOR MINISTER (AND BEFORE THAT CHIEF OF POLICE) GENERAL ALBANO HARGUINDEGUY. FERNANDEZ GAVE A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE WAY THE MACHINERY FOR ILLEGAL REPRESSION WAS PUT TOGETHER, THE EXTREME RIGHTWING IDEOLOGY BEHIND IT, AND THE WAY IT FUNCTIONED -- NAMING NAMES AND CASES. MOST OF WHAT HE

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7068  
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SAID HAD BEEN KNOWN OR SURMISED EARLIER, BUT AT LEAST ONE NEWSPAPER CALLED HIS STATEMENT "PROBABLY THE MOST DAMAGING FOR THE REGIME SINCE THE DEVASTATING REPORT ON THE SITUATION HERE MADE BY THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES IN 1979."

5. (U) COURT BACKS "LA SEMANA"

THE ADMINISTRATIVE COURT OF APPEALS ON APRIL 15 UPHELD THE DECISION TAKEN EARLIER BY A LOWER COURT TO ORDER THE FEDERAL POLICE TO RETURN ALL CONFISCATED COPIES OF ISSUE 328 OF "LA SEMANA" MAGAZINE (SEE REFTTEL) TO PERFIL PUBLISHING COMPANY. THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH HAD CONFISCATED THE ISSUE AND ORDERED THE ARREST OF EDITOR JORGE FONTEVECCHIA UNDER THE TERMS OF THE "STATE OF SIEGE" BECAUSE THE MAGAZINE CONTAINED ARTICLES THAT ACCUSED THE ARMED FORCES OF VIOLATING HUMAN RIGHTS. ACCORDING TO THE COURT OF APPEALS, THE [REDACTED]  
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STATE OF SIEGE THAT HAS BEEN IN FORCE FOR OVER EIGHT YEARS CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH "A TREND TOWARDS INSTITUTIONAL NORMALITY IS EVIDENT". THE COURT STRESSED THAT THE RIGHT TO PUBLISH IDEAS "NOT ONLY IS AN IMPORTANT EXPRESSION OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY BUT ALSO IS AN ESSENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO FORMING PUBLIC OPINION... AND THE REPUBLICAN AND REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM IS BASED ON IT."

6. [REDACTED] COMMENT: THIS IS THE SECOND TIME IN FOUR MONTHS THAT "LA SEMANA" HAS WON IN COURT AFTER HAVING AN ISSUE CONFISCATED, AND WE EXPECT IT WILL CONTINUE TO HIT OUT AT THE CURRENT MILITARY GOVERNMENT. WE DOUBT THAT FONTEVECCHIA WILL RETURN FROM EXILE (HE IS CURRENTLY IN VENEZUELA) UNTIL A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT IS ELECTED. END COMMENT.

7. (U) JUDGE MAKES SURPRISE INSPECTION OF PRISON

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES REPORTED THAT FEDERAL JUDGE OSCAR SALVI CARRIED OUT A NINE-HOUR SURPRISE INSPECTION OF LASEROS PRISON ON APRIL 13 TO INVESTIGATE RECENT ALLEGATIONS THAT PRISONERS THERE ARE MISTREATED BY PRISON AUTHORITIES. SALVI REPORTEDLY TOOK TESTIMONY FROM APPROXIMATELY 30 PRISONERS. RELATIVES OF THE PRISONERS TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE PRISONERS WERE

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BADLY TREATED AND THE GENERAL CONDITIONS IN THE PRISON REGARDING FOOD AND HYGIENE WERE DEPLORABLE. THE PRISON HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF CRITICISM IN THE PAST.

8. (U) CELS DOCUMENTS 47 SECRET DETENTION CENTERS

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THE CENTER FOR LEGAL AND SOCIAL STUDIES (CELS) ON APRIL 19 RELEASED A LIST OF 47 SECRET DETENTION CENTERS THAT IT CLAIMS WERE USED BY THE ARMED FORCES TO HOUSE AND TO TORTURE POLITICAL DETAINEES AFTER THE MILITARY COUP OF MARCH 24, 1976. THE LIST WAS COMPILED FROM THE TESTIMONY OF 65 PEOPLE WHO WERE HELD IN THE CAMPS AND THEN RELEASED. CELS ALSO COMPILED THE NAMES OF 600 PEOPLE CURRENTLY LISTED AS MISSING WHO HAVE BEEN SIGHTED AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER IN ONE OF THE 47 CENTERS BY DETAINEES WHO HAVE SINCE BEEN RELEASED. A CELS SPOKESMAN TOLD THE PRESS THAT THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE TO CONCLUDE THAT THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES OF THE DETENTION CENTERS KEPT CAREFUL LISTS OF THE DETAINEES UNDER THEIR CHARGE AND KEPT RECORDS OF THEIR EVENTUAL FATE.

9. (U) AT THE SAME PRESS CONFERENCE, CELS VICE PRESIDENT AUGUSTO CONTE MACDONNEL SAID THAT ARGENTINE HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS HAVE MADE AVAILABLE ALL THE INFORMATION THEY HAVE TO THE JUDICIARY IN THE HOPE OF SPURRING JUDGES TO INVESTIGATE THE EXISTENCE OF THE CAMPS. "THAT THEY (THE JUDGES) HAVE NOT DONE SO SERIOUSLY COMPROMISES THEIR STATURE BEFORE THE LAW," MACDONNEL ADDED.

10. [REDACTED] COMMENT: MUCH OF THE CELS INFORMATION IS NOT NEW, BUT SOME ADDS TO WHAT WAS ALREADY KNOWN. WE THINK THAT CELS HAS PUBLISHED THE LIST TO SHOW THAT A FAIRLY ACCURATE ACCOUNTING FOR MISSING PERSONS IS POSSIBLE, TO PUSH THE JUDICIARY TO DO MORE

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TO OBTAIN SUCH AN ACCOUNTING. SHLAUDEMAN

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